JOSH HELIN ’14

GRADUATE DEGREE: Master of Architecture
UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE: B.A. in Geography - Miami University
CURRENT JOB: Architectural Assistant, Herzog & de Meuron

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE ARCHITECTURE?

I grew up in a family with Scandinavian roots and design was something important to daily life—something of cultural value. I remember thinking from a young age how profoundly design—whether objects, architecture, or urban form—affects behavior and redefines ‘place.’ That’s why I studied geography; it was a good education, but I knew I really wanted to be an architect and a designer.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE OSU FOR YOUR M.A.RCH DEGREE?

I got lucky; I believe it’s one of the best programs in the world, but I didn’t know that at the time. It’s quite avant-garde, but also down to earth. I’ve worked with people from Princeton, Harvard, the ETH, the AA, and other great schools, and they receive different educations but not a better one. The Knowlton School [of Architecture] has great facilities, resources, an incredible faculty, important lecturers, talented fellows, et cetera, and whether you mean to or not, you’ll receive a world-class education.

WHICH ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM DID YOU FIND PARTICULARLY STRONG, UNIQUE OR VALUABLE?

I think history and theory are strong points of the curriculum, and these are fundamental to being a good designer. At Knowlton you learn about architecture as a formal language, which is applicable to everyone from Lutyens to Greg Lynn. Architecture happens at the level of subtle differences, and usually there is a history of these differences worth studying. The people I meet lacking history and theory (not surprisingly) seem to know little about architecture. Knowlton is still radical and experimental, which is becoming quite rare; I’ll say it’s one of few contemporary schools today.

IN YOUR FIRST JOB DID YOU HAVE SKILLS THAT PEOPLE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS DID NOT HAVE?

Understanding architecture as a formal discipline, that is: that the form of buildings have a certain behavior, that every curve, facet, detail, and absent-detail does something. I know how to have a concept and make it into a project. I know how to experiment and I’m familiar with a large body of work as reference.

HOW DID YOUR TIME IN THE PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR A CAREER IN YOUR FIELD?

The program teaches you how to be an architect, not someone who just makes buildings. They teach you the history of the discipline, practical issues, contemporary issues, and you figure out how you fit in. There are also technical/practical considerations—you learn how to draw a section, you learn software, you learn about code, contracts, construction, structures, etc. You learn it all.

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN EMPLOYING RECENT GRADUATES AND WHY WOULD YOU EMPLOY A GRADUATE FROM THE KNOWLTON SCHOOL?

I would look for someone with some passion, who knows a body of work and can make an argument about it, and who uses contemporary tools to break convention. I’d hire a Knowlton grad because they have great technical skills, they’re designers, they communicate, they know projects, they understand the discipline, and they seem hungry. Knowlton grads are true students of Architecture.